

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1 1. A method of processing information as documents on a network,
2 wherein a client request is a document and a response from an agency server to the client
3 request is also a document, the method comprising the steps of:
4 addressing the client request to the agency server;
5 coupling an agent card to the agency server, wherein the agent card includes response
6 functionality;
7 following the coupling of the agent card to the agency server, instantiating an agent
8 object with a state derived from data stored on the agent card; and
9 when a document is received at the agency server and is to be acted upon by the
10 agent object, passing at least a reference of the document to the agent object.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of instantiating an agent object
2 is a step of either instantiating the agent object on the agency server or instantiating the
3 agent object on the agent card.
- 1 3. A networked information appliance for use on a network, comprising:
2 a plurality of agency base units, wherein each agency base unit is configured on the
3 network with an address; and
4 a plurality of agent cards, wherein each agent card includes state for at least one
5 response functionality that is provided to a user of the network at an address
6 dependent on the address of the agency base unit into which the agent card is
7 mounted, wherein a response functionality implements one or more functions of
8 responding to document requests.
- 1 4. The networked information appliance of claim 3, wherein the plurality
2 of agency base units are coupled to an agency device and the agency device is an HTTP
3 server.
- 1 5. The networked information appliance of claim 3, wherein state of an
2 agent card is stored as an XML file in a file system on the agent card.

1 6. The networked information appliance of claim 3, wherein
2 transformations of documents as described by a tagset are stored as a tagset file in a file
3 system on the agent card.

1 7. The networked information appliance of claim 3, wherein each agent
2 card includes program instructions for applying transforms specified in a tagset to a
3 document.

1 8. The networked information appliance of claim 3, wherein the agent
2 cards include state, tagsets and data in a static file structure.

1 9. The networked information appliance of claim 3, wherein the agent
2 cards include state, tagsets and data in a file structure and on-card processing for
3 processing messages received from an agency through a message passing interface.

1 10. The networked information appliance of claim 3, wherein the agency
2 includes processing logic and means for signaling an ejection request, wherein the
3 processing logic causes a state of an agent card to be written to the agent card prior to the
4 agent card being removed from the agency unit.

1 11. A networked information appliance for use on a network, comprising:
2 a plurality of agency base units, wherein each agency base unit is configured on the
3 network with an address and is coupled to an HTTP server; and
4 a plurality of agent cards, wherein each agent card includes state, stored as an XML
5 file in an agent card file system, for at least one response functionality that is
6 provided to a user of the network at an address dependent on the address of the
7 agency base unit into which the agent card is mounted, wherein a response
8 functionality implements one or more functions of responding to document
9 requests.